

# INITIAL STUDY / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION



BEFORE



AFTER

**07-LA-405 K.P.41.0/47.6 (P.M. 25.5/29.6)**

Federal Highway Administration  
California Department of Transportation

**June 2000**

**NEGATIVE DECLARATION (CEQA)**

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Description

The proposed project would widen Interstate 405 (San Diego Freeway) from ten to twelve lanes in order to provide one high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. The project would extend from State Route 90 (Marina Freeway) to Interstate 10 (Santa Monica Freeway), in the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City, in Los Angeles County, a distance of 6.6 kilometers (4.1 miles). In addition, the northbound Sawtelle off-ramp will be closed and the Culver Boulevard on-ramp will become an off-ramp. A frontage road will be added adjacent to the southbound side, connecting Sawtelle Boulevard to Braddock Drive west of I-405. The project is being proposed to relieve traffic congestion by encouraging commuters to rideshare, and is one of several such projects being considered for I-405 to provide for a continuous HOV facility.

Construction of the proposed project is expected to require approximately three years. Construction activities would be planned and conducted in such a manner as to reduce traffic delay as much as possible. The construction process would be managed by a traffic control plan. Soundwalls and retaining walls would also be constructed as part of the proposed project.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). On the basis of this study it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect upon the environment for the following reasons:

1. The project would not substantially affect topography, seismic exposure, erosion, floodplains, wetlands or water quality.
2. The proposed project will not significantly affect natural vegetation, sensitive, endangered or threatened plant or animal species, or agriculture.
3. The proposed project will not significantly affect solid wastes, or the consumption of energy and natural resources.
4. The proposed project will promote improved regional air quality.
5. The proposed project will result in increased noise levels along its route, but with the addition of soundwalls, these effects will be reduced to acceptable levels.
6. The proposed project will not significantly affect land use, public facilities or other socioeconomic features.
7. The proposed project will not significantly affect cultural resources, scenic resources, aesthetics, open space or parklands. Landscaping will be provided to mitigate the loss of existing freeway vegetation.

*Original Signed by Ronald Kosinski for Raja Mitwasi*

*June 19, 2000*

Raja Mitwasi, Deputy Director  
California Department of Transportation  
District 7

Date

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Purpose and Need for the Project .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Background.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Purpose and Need .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Description of the Proposed Project .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2 Existing Facility and Scope of Project.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.3 Status of Other Proposals in the Project Area.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.4 Proposed Project Alternatives .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.5 Major Investment Study Corridor Analysis .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3. Affected Environment .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.2 Topography.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.3 Geology, Soils, Seismicity, Hydrology / Water Quality , and         Floodplain .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.4 Air Quality .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3.5 Noise.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.6 Hazardous Waste.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.7 Biological Resources .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3.8 Land Use and Planning.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.9 Social and Economic Resources .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.10 Public Services and Facilities .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.11 Cultural Resources.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4. Environmental Evaluation.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.2 List of Technical Studies/Reports.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.3 Environmental Significance Checklist.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## Table of Contents (continued)

<b>5. Discussion of Environmental Evaluation.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>5.1 Physical.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>5.2 Social and Economic .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>6. Consultation and Coordination .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>6.1 Scoping Process .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>6.2 Community Meetings .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>6.3 Public Comment Period for the IS / EA.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>7. List of Preparers .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>8. Determination.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>9. Comments and Responses .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>9.1 Public Hearing Transcript.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>9.2 Responses to Comments Received at Public Hearing.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>9.3 Letters Received .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>10. Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation .....</b>	<b>172</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1 - Location Map .....	2
Figure 2 - Vicinity Map .....	3
Figure 3 - Ballona Creek Watershed.....	20
Figure 4 - Census Tracts in the Project Area .....	24
Figure 5 - Scoping Notice.....	47
Figure 6 - <i>Culver City News</i> Advertisement for Informational Meeting.....	49

## **List of Tables**

Table 1 - Level of Service (LOS) and Equivalent V/C Ratios .....	5
Table 2 - Current and Forecasted Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes .....	6
Table 3 - Congestion and Capacity Summary .....	7
Table 4 - Accident Data from TASAS Table B.....	9
Table 5 - LARTS Traffic Projections for Year 2020 .....	10
Table 6 - Existing and Projected LOS for Local City Streets.....	14
Table 7 - Study Area Demographic Variables.....	25
Table 8 - Study Area Ethnic Composition.....	26
Table 9 - Vacancy Information Among the Census Tracts in the Project Area .....	27
Table 10 - Environmental Significance Checklist .....	32
Table 11 - Year 2020 Carbon Monoxide Concentration Projections .....	39
Table 12 - Local Air Quality.....	40

## Appendices

Appendix A – List of Acronyms.....	186
Appendix B – Layout Sections of Ultimate Width HOV Facility (Alternative 3a).....	189
Appendix C – Layout Sections of Ultimate Width HOV Facility with Ramp Consolidation (Alternative 3b).....	208
Appendix D – Layout Sections of Ultimate Width HOV Facility with Ramp Consolidation II (Modified Alternative 3ab) .....	213
Appendix E – Typical Cross Section (Alternatives 3a, 3b, and Mod. Alt. 3ab).....	230
Appendix F – Proposed Soundwall Locations and Leq.....	232
Appendix G – California Noxious Species List.....	240
Appendix H – Agency Correspondence .....	246
Appendix I – Right-of-Way Acquisitions.....	263
Appendix J – Summary of Relocation Benefits Available to Displaced Parties .....	266
Appendix K – Title VI Policy Statement.....	272
Appendix L – Mailing List .....	274

Note: A vertical line in the margin indicates that changes were made in the text from the Draft Environmental Document (Initial Study / Environmental Assessment) to the Final Environmental Document (Negative Declaration / Finding of No Significant Impact).

## 6. Consultation and Coordination

### 6.1 Scoping Process

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations do not require an IS / EA to include formal scoping procedures. However, in light of the connectivity of this project, and its regional significance as a project onto itself, efforts were undertaken to ensure that the concerns of the cities and other parties were known.

Scoping for this project was conducted to solicit public concerns and ensure early consultation. Letters to elected officials and government agencies were sent (dated October 2, 1998). In addition, public scoping advertisements (Figure 5) were placed in the following newspapers: Los Angeles Times (June 18, 1998), Culver City News (June 18, 1998), La Opinion (June 18, 1998), The Argonaut (June 18, 1998), The Daily Breeze (June 18, 1998), The Los Angeles Sentinel (June 18, 1998), and The Compton Bulletin (June 24, 1998). Comments were received until November 3, 1998. Issues raised in these comments included the following:

- Concerns regarding traffic congestion and mitigation.
- Support for the project.
- Opposition to the project.
- Impacts and plans for adjacent projects.
- Concerns regarding construction impacts.
- Concerns about population growth in Los Angeles.
- Traffic problems in Los Angeles have been a long-term problem.
- Concerns that commuters in Los Angeles do not carpool.
- Other recommendations were offered to improve traffic flow.
- Concerns about changes and modifications to on and off-ramps.
- Concern about ramp connection to I-10.
- Concern that lanes will be taken away.
- Impacts on traffic due to the future expansion of LAX.

Letters to elected officials and government agencies were sent (dated October 3, 1998). Comments were received from the Culver City Department of Public Works, the LAMTA, and from members of the public. Issues raised in these comments included the following:

- Recommendation to document the impacts in an Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement.
- Recommendation to consult Culver City project designers for ramps.
- Concerns that landscaped slopes were being replaced by retaining walls and soundwalls.
- Concern about HOV access in Culver City.
- Concern about drainage on the facility.



Figure 5 – Scoping Notice

## SCOPING NOTICE

**Seeking Public Comment on Plans For  
High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes  
on Route 405  
In the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City**

<p><b>WHAT'S BEING PLANNED</b></p>	<p>The Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 7 is proposing to construct a north-bound and south-bound high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane on Route 405 between Route 90 and Route 10 in the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City. Generally, these improvements will be accommodated in the existing Right-of-Way, but minor additional Right-of-Way may be required.</p>
<p><b>WHY THIS NOTICE</b></p>	<p>Caltrans is formally initiating studies for this improvement. Preliminary environmental studies indicate that the resulting environmental document will be an Initial Study (IS) which should lead to a Negative Declaration (ND)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).</p> <p>A public hearing will be held to discuss the project studies when sufficient engineering, environmental and socioeconomic data have been developed. The public hearing will be publicized and you will be notified well in advance of the hearing time and location.</p>
<p><b>WHAT CAN YOU DO?</b></p>	<p>This notice is to solicit public comments on this project, and insure an early involvement of public agencies, interested groups, and individuals in the environmental process.</p> <p>We will be pleased to answer any questions you may have with regard to this project. Please send your written comments by <u>July 10, 1998</u> to:</p> <div style="margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p><b>Ronald J. Kosinski, Chief</b> Office of Environmental Planning Department of Transportation (Caltrans) 120 S. Spring Street Los Angeles, CA 90012</p> </div> </div>
<p><b>CONTACT</b></p>	<p>If you wish to be on a mailing list for actions concerning this project or to receive more information about this study, call Ronald Kosinski, Office of Environmental Planning at (213) 897-0703.</p>

In addition, a newspaper article in the Los Angeles Times "Westside Weekly" (July 3, 1998) incorrectly indicated that "Caltrans is seeking public comments on plans for carpool lanes on the Santa Monica Freeway in Los Angeles and Culver City." The freeway mentioned in this advertisement [the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10)] does not extend into Culver City. A total of five responses were received in regards to this erroneous newspaper article. Issues raised in these comments included the following:

- Opposition to HOV lanes.
- Concerns that commuters in Los Angeles do not carpool.
- Concern that lanes will be taken away.
- Concern that adding an HOV lane would slow down traffic.
- Benefit of extra space in case of emergency.
- Support for HOV lanes as they enhance quality of life.

## **6.2 Community Meetings**

A Town Hall Meeting was sponsored by State Senator Kevin Murray (26<sup>th</sup> District) on August 26, 1999 at the Culver City City Hall Council Chambers. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the congestion on the I-405 Freeway. Residents were able to hear about this project and two other highway projects located in the vicinity.

The City of Culver City sponsored a public forum meeting on February 17, 2000 at the Veteran's Memorial Building Auditorium in Culver City (Figure 6). The purpose of the meeting was to address citizen's concerns in prior meetings. Caltrans' staff was on hand to address concerns and update the public as to progress on the project.

## **6.3 Public Comment Period for the IS / EA**

The IS/EA document was circulated for public comment beginning November 9, 1999. The comment period officially closed on December 31, 1999. An opportunity for a public meeting was offered at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium (4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City) from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on December 9, 1999. Notice of this public meeting was placed in appropriate local newspapers. Copies of this IS/EA document can be reviewed at the Caltrans, District 7 Office, the Culver City Library (4975 Overland Avenue, Culver City), and the Mar Vista Library (12006 Venice Boulevard, Los Angeles).

Comments on this document were submitted in writing before December 31, 1999, and were sent to the attention of:

Ronald Kosinski  
Office of Environmental Planning  
Caltrans, District 7  
120 South Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Figure 6 – Culver City News Advertisement for Informational Meeting**



## **Notice Of Scheduled CalTrans Information Meeting For Route 405 HOV Improvement Project**

The California Department of Transportation – Caltrans - proposes to construct a north-bound and south-bound High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane on Interstate 405 between Interstate 10 and State Route 90 (Marina Freeway) in the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City. For the most part these improvements will be accommodated on existing property, but additional property for the freeway on- and off-ramps will be required.

You are cordially invited to attend an upcoming meeting. Caltrans representatives will be present to answer questions regarding this project:

**When: Thursday, February 17, 2000**

**Time: 6:30 p.m. through 8:30 p.m.**

**Location: Veterans Memorial Building  
Auditorium Facility  
4117 Overland Avenue  
Culver City, CA 90232**

The City of Culver City is hosting this meeting to provide Caltrans a public forum in which to address concerns expressed in prior meetings.

If you have any questions, please contact Max Paetzold of the City of Culver City, at 310-253-5633.